

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 27, 2004**

**CONTACT: Mark Bayer**

**Ana Unruh**

**(202) 225-2836**

## **MARKEY ASKS BUSH TO EXPLAIN WHY THE ONLY REFUGES HE IS PROTECTING FROM OIL DEVELOPMENT ARE IN FLORIDA**

Washington, D. C. – Today, Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Resources Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committee, sent a letter to President Bush regarding the purchase of private mineral rights under National Wildlife Refuges in Florida that the President highlighted in his speech on Friday at the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

“On Friday, President Bush made clear that the purchase of private oil and gas rights is necessary to ‘preserve’ certain wildlife refuges in Florida,” said Rep. Markey. “Now that the President has recognized the value of restoring habitat protection to primacy in these Florida refuges by buying out private mineral rights, the American people deserve to know whether this policy will be applied consistently throughout the rest of the United States. If it is good policy to protect these Florida refuges from oil and gas development, then it should be good policy to protect all refuges from oil and gas development.”

In August 2003 at the request of Rep. Markey, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report documented the tragic legacy of oil and gas activities in the National Wildlife Refuge System – oil spills, abandoned infrastructure, soil and water contamination, and loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat. According to the GAO, there are 4,406 wells on 105 refuges. The majority of the wells on refuges are no longer active, but they can still pose a threat to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and the proper management of wildlife refuges. The 1,806 active wells in the refuge system are located on just 35 (out of 575) refuges, indicating that oil and gas development is far from a routine activity. In fact, the vast majority of development occurs because of privately-owned, grandfathered mineral rights like those purchased in Florida.

For further information, please visit <http://www.house.gov/markey/>

###